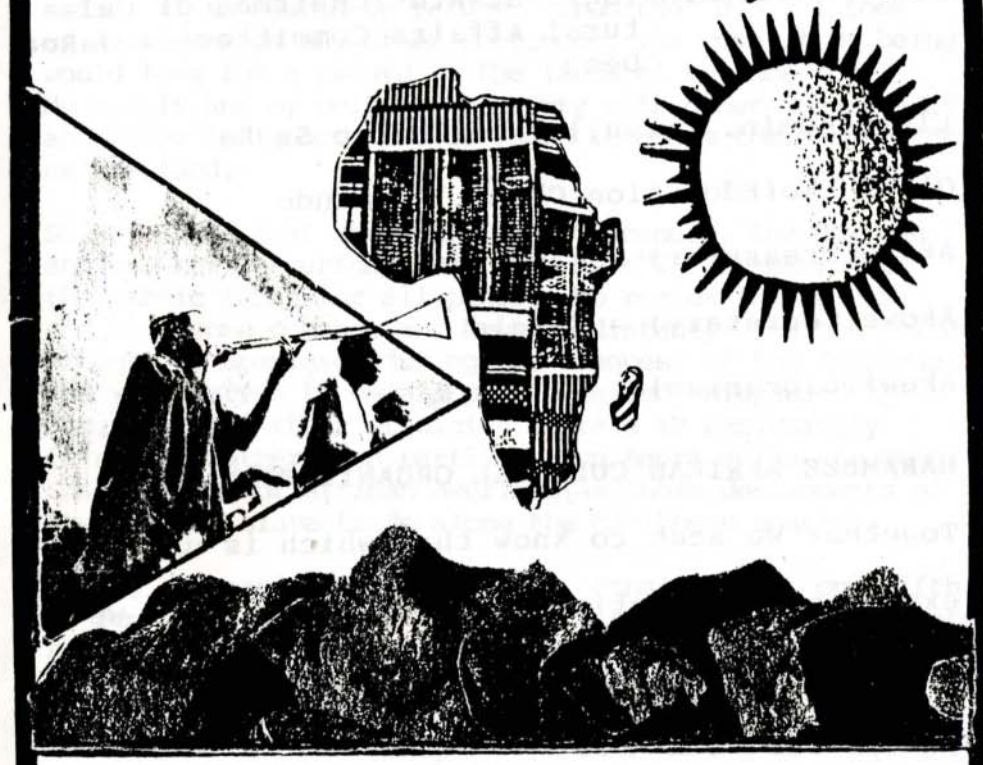
HARAMBEE FLAME

Vol. XVI No. 7 July 1995



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HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION CREED

Together we seek to know that which is us, to expand our collective consciousness of who we are and whence we come. We exalt in the fact that Afrikans are beautiful in our own right rather than at the expense of any other ethnic group. And in the true spirit of the Swahili word, "harambee," we promote the idea that cultural awareness is germane to human growth.

Guest Commentary

Who really are the "Hispanics," and where did this word, "Hispanic" come from? As a Chicano and Mexic-Amerindian, I am offended by this gross misnomer, "Hispanic." By U.S. standards and according to some North American Native Americans, Chicanos/as, Mexic-Amerindians, and Mexicans cannot make valid claims to be indigenous. Socio-economic status, genetic make-up, and ongoing debates on "Mestisaje" aside, if in search of refuge from the U.S., I took up residence on any other continent, the core of my being would long for a return to the lands of my ancestors. My spirit and my collective memory with other Mestizos/as and other indigenous people yearn to claim these territories as homeland.

So why is it that many label the Chicano/a, the Mexican, and the Mexic-Amerindian as "Hispanic"? "Hispanic" is the ethnic label for all people who reside in the U.S. and have some connection, however distant, with the culture brought by Spaniards during the conquest of the Americas. The word serves to negate people called "Hispanic" by implying that their ethnicity or race is exclusively European, rather than partly Native American(as are most Chicanos/as) or African American(as those descendants of the African slave trade along the Caribbean coasts).

Again, "Hispanic" is a misnomer. Consider that one fifth of South America, Brasil, is not a Spanish-speaking country. A large portion of the population of Guatamala speaks indigenous language and dialects and maintains its indigenous cultures. Chicanos/as and Puerto Ricans may have little or no fluency in Spanish, having been brought up in English-dominant societies, having attended monolingual(English) schools, and having been discouraged, in general, from pursuing the languages of their ancestors. In fact, despite the provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe de Hidalgo of 1848 to allow speakers of Spanish in the Southwest to retain their native tongue, Spanish was prohibited in the schools and work places.

If "Hispanic" refers to all natives and descendants of Latin America, it is including no fewer than twenty countries, whose shared patterns of colonization may allow

them to be considered Pan-American but whose histories and cultures are, nevertheless diverse in very particular ways.

"Hispanic" gives us all one ultimate paternal cultural progenitor: Spain. The diverse cultures already on the American shores when the Europeans arrived, as well as those introduced because of the African slave trade, are completely obliterated by the term. "Hispanic" is nothing more than a U.S. government compromise. When it saw that it could not get rid of us, it decided to Europeanize us, make us presentable guests at the dinner table, take away our feathers and rattles and "civilize" us once and for all.

The ignorance of the dominant white society about our ways, struggles in society, our history and culture is not an innocent or passive ignorance but a systematic and determined ignorance. It is part of an ongoing program of what I call "culturcide."

Many of us--starved for affirmation about who we are as Mexic-Amerindian(Chicano) people--realize, from strenuous research in and out of the university classrooms and the local libraries, that we have descended from people with blood ties traceable on the American continents for many thousands of years, people who left records demonstrating phenomenal artistic and scientific achievements.

In 1980, when the Republicans and the Reagan administration came into office, their tremendous repression quashed the momentum of the Chicano/Latino Movement, a movement based on collectivism and retention of other aspects of our Mexican/Amerindian culture. Community projects and grassroots programs dependent on government funding--job training, child-care, early education and alternative schooling, youth counseling, projects supporting the arts and community artists, rehab housing for low-income families, and women's shelters--shut down. In their places the old "American Dream"--a WASP male philosophy--was reinstated. As in U.S. society before the Civil Rights Movement, material accumulation equalled self-worth.

The new generation of Chicanos/as and Latinos/as who came of age in the late 1980s, and now the mid-1990s, have a radically different attitude than the collective mentality of the 1970s activists, believing that, after two hundred years of racist and ethnic exploitation, the age of the "Hispanic" has finally come. Their abuelos, tios, parents(some who had been in the Chicano/Latino Movement) had paid dues for the "American Dream." Many of this new generation feel they can now finally claim their own place in society. They have become assimilated.

Embracing Chicano nationalism and acknowledging our indigenismo blood is the first step to our empowerment. We must not allow our true cultural and historical identity to fall into the melting pot of the Anglophile culture of this society. We must recognize the dominant bloodline of our ancient Mexic-Amerindian ancestors, the Olmecs, whose origins in the Americas pre-date 1,000 B.C., and our Nahua/Aztec/Maya lineages. We are not Hispanic either by race or choice.

Somos Mexica-Amerindians, Mestizo/a, somos Chicano/a!

-Rudy Rosales, President of M.A.T.A.(Mexican Awareness Through Association), Nebraska State Prison

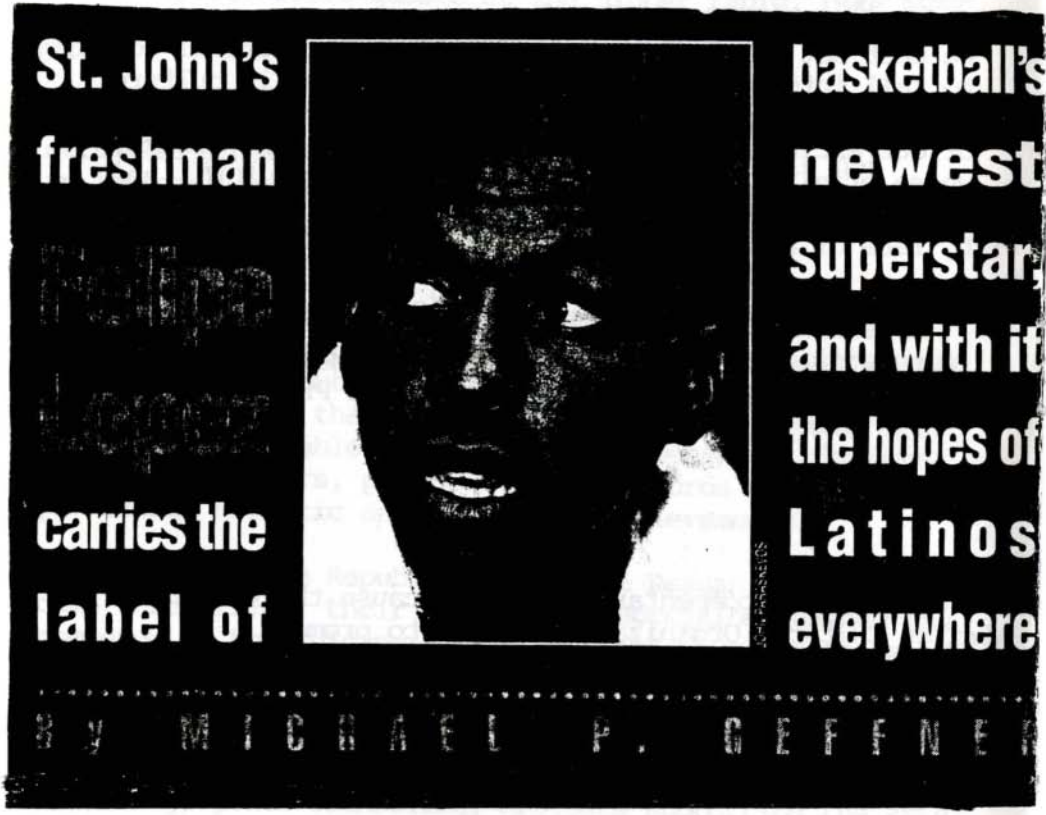
Commentary

The above guest commentary appears because the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization wishes to promote understanding and cooperation among people of color and, also, because the issue of identity is no less important to and for African people than it is for Chicanos(as)/Mexicanos(as). We thank Rudy for his contribution.

As the guest editorial points out, "The diverse cultures already on the American shores when the Europeans arrived, as well as those introduced because of the **African slave trade**, are completely obliterated by the term['Hispanic']." Can there be any clearer example of the truth of this than

the photo and caption, shown below, from a recent edition of Sporting News? In the text which accompanies the photo, it is stated: "As Felipe Lopez readies himself to play his first season with St. John's, they're already calling him the **Hispanic** Michael Jordan." It goes on further to suggest that he might become "the first great **Latino** in the NBA."

A question immediately comes to mind. What makes this young man Latino/Hispanic? Is it the fact that he has


St. John's freshman
carries the label of
basketball's newest superstar, and with it the hopes of Latinos everywhere
By MICHAEL P. GEFFNER

a Spanish last name? If so, is Shaquille O'Neal a big and strong Irish or Scottish basketball player? If Felipe's first language is Spanish, is it this that makes him Latino/Hispanic? If so, then African people born in the U.S. and who speak English--commonly, as our only language--must be Englishmen(and women). Or could it be the fact that Felipe is from the Dominican Republic, which was,

(Cont. on page 10)

Editorial Policy

The HARAMBEE FLAME is the monthly newsletter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(Nebraska State Pen chapter). Ours is a pan-Africanist publication, meaning that we view all people of African descent as one African people, having certain basic interests in common. Also, the HARAMBEE FLAME attempts to be Africentric, in that, through study of the history, cultures, and traditional values of African people, we seek to have and cultivate an African way of looking at things.

The main purposes of the HARAMBEE FLAME are to stimulate and inform. We list "stimulate" first because, more than anything else, we want our readers to be moved to question their/your own ideas, lives, and the circumstances in which we live and to challenge those things that must be challenged in order for us to move from a condition of mental and spiritual servitude and physical dependence upon Caucasian institutions to a state of collective self-determination. Toward this purpose, we present commentaries, poems, etc. These do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization.

The HARAMBEE FLAME provides information because wise people want to know what's going on and because certain kinds of information can stimulate the mind, inspire people to want to act, and influence them to pursue proper understanding so that the actions they take will be as effective as possible. The main vehicle we use to provide information is our "From Other Sources" feature in which we make an effort to provide news about the problems we African people are confronted by and the steps we are taking to resolve them. In this feature, we try to provide coverage of the activities of African people and developments affecting us in the U.S., Africa, and elsewhere. "Community News" is another vehicle.

We encourage you to submit your reports, essays, poems, etc. Please enclose stamped return envelope.

From Other Sources

African Children And The Foster Care Industry

"Foster care has become big business on a scale much greater than one hundred plus years ago when it was conceived. The social welfare system started out as a movement to help unfortunate, i.e., the destitute, orphaned children, or widows with children. From the small private, and church-run orphanages which constituted the entire system, it has grown to the point that it is now an industrial-size institution. Prior to the 1930s, most social work consisted of charity which was given to the destitute. Today, it is a complicated system of social workers, psychologists, therapists, administrators,...

"When a woman is identified as a drug user while she is pregnant, she is immediately classified as high-risk. A wide range of social and medical 'services' are brought to bear upon her. Special tests, administered by specialized technicians, are given and analyzed and 'recommendations' are made. This lays the groundwork for specialized foster care, i.e., foster care for children who have special needs. A mother who is unable to avail herself of all these special services--in her child's best interest--loses her child to the 'system'. Originally, foster care was a temporary arrangement made to provide for a child's care until the child could be returned to his/her natural parents. Not so today. Because...'the wider use of contraceptives and the greater availability of abortifacients have dramatically reduced the number of available 'adoptees'--especially white infants' other methods of obtaining children had to be developed...Sometimes, through the **Black** market, arrangements are made between the natural mother and the prospective parents,(generating very high profits)--white families are paying very high fees to obtain babies and children...One way to have solved this problem would have been foster care. But foster care payments are low and are terminated once the child is adopted. In 1980, a partial solution was found, i.e., a way to assist white families in adopting children and maintaining them for relatively little cost as well as a way to guarantee long

term foster placement for the increasing number of children being taken from 'unfit' mothers/homes. Foster care no longer stresses returning the children to their homes by providing support and treatment to their natural parents...

"After the creation of the new 'specialized foster care' category, whites started taking our Black children in record numbers. Most Black foster homes receive minimal support approximately $200.00 per child per month, whereas, white homes received from $800.00 - $2500.00 per child per month for these 'specialized placements'. The caretakers of Black children who remain with their blood relatives(Relative Foster Care)who receive foster care payments, are being crippled by the latest legislation...

"The chief commodity of white foster care agencies is Black children. They provide a full range of services and funding to support these placements. Whites are being recruited and encouraged to take more children. In order for a Black home to be approved, the family has to meet standards and adopt living styles that are not traditionally Black. Black homes are scrutinized, investigated, analyzed and subjected to an excessive series of 'interviews'...

-from "Foster Care: Disconnecting The Black Family," page 12, Vol. 5, No.5 MOBETTER NEWS(So. Holland, IL)

Nigerian Politics Cause Of Friction At TransAfrica Forum

"TransAfrica, the Black lobbying group for Africa and the Caribbean, held its annual forum and awards dinner June 1-3...

"In April, TransAfrica Executive Director Randall Robinson led a demonstration of U.S. civil rights and labor groups in front of the Nigerian embassy. At the protest, Mr. Robinson announced that TransAfrica plans to lobby against Nigeria's military government as vigourously as the lobbying group rallied against the former apartheid government of South Africa, until the military regime in the country is dismantled...

"The TransAfrica annual meeting included a symposium,

'Nigeria at the Crossroads', held at the Rayburn Building on Capital Hill where a panel of experts and Nigerian nationals explored the crisis in Nigeria and remedies for solving the crisis.

"Susan Rice, special assistant to President Clinton for African Affairs, told the symposium that the U.S. is 'very concerned' about the Nigeria crisis, and is dealing with the country on a 'case by case review'...

"Dr. Edward Oparaoji, the chairman of the Nigerian Democratic Awareness Committee, a U.S.-based organization of Nigerian nationals told the forum that a new government of 'national unity' must replace military dictators, but must be led by Chief Moshood K.O. Abiola, who many Nigerians say won thee June 12, 1993 election which was annulled by military leaders in the country.

"Last year Mr. Abiola was jailed and charged with treason by the military government when he declared himself President of Nigeria on the anniversary of the 1993 election...

"Nwosisi Chuckwuji, who heads the Patriotic Youth Movement, a U.S.-based group of Nigerians concerned with Nigeria's image, said he 'opposes TransAfrica's approach' to his nation's crisis.

"'I believe that there should be democracy in Nigeria and Nigerians have a major role to play in it, not Randall Robinson', Mr. Chuckwuji said, citing how many problems in the country, including tribal clashes, were created by the U.S. and Britain...

"Criticizing the Nigeria symposium, he said TransAfrica was being 'antagonist' by convening the forum and not having panelist[s] with other views...

"Onuoha Chuckunta, a Nigerian professor of Humanities at Essex College in Newark...accused the U.S. of being hypocritical for its focus on Nigeria, yet denying civil rights to Black Americans...

"The professor warned TransAfrica's efforts could damage African-Black American relations."

-from "TransAfrica Forum Highlights Political Crisis In Nigeria," pages 5 and 10, June 21 THE FINAL CALL(Chicago, IL.)

Sources

The following newspapers, newsletters, and magazines are among those we excerpt from for "From Other Sources." We encourage you to check them out.

MOBETTER NEWS
P.O. Box 1447
So. Holland, IL. 60473

ARM THE MASSES
28 Vesey St., #2298
N.Y., N.Y. 10007

THE THIRD EYE
P.O. Box 80435
Nashville, TN. 37208

COALITION FOR PRISONERS' RIGHTS Newsletter
P.O. Box 1911
Santa Fe, N.M. 87504-1911

THE FINAL CALL
734 W. 79th. St.
Chicago, IL. 60620

N.Y. AMSTERDAM NEWS
2340 Frederick Douglass Blvd.
N.Y., N.Y. 10027

EMERGE Magazine
1700 No. Moore St.
Suite 2200
Arlington, VA. 22209

THE LIBERATOR
P.O. Box 92580
Atlanta, GA. 30314

We have received communication regarding publication of a new magazine, COLLAGE: The National Journal Of African Americans In The Arts. The publisher states that COLLAGE "takes you straight to the people and organizations at the center of the activity that is redefining the arts in America." Write to COLLAGE; 139 Fulton St.; N.Y., N.Y.; 10038. Phone no.: (212) 267-1110.

at one time, claimed by Spain as its territory? If this is so, then the people of Haiti, who fought against France for their independence, must be French. Somebody's running game on somebody and the name of the game aint "basketball." But as we, Africans and other people of color as well, fall victim to the game, we do become basket cases.

Africans in this country who, to some degree or other, identify with the U.S. call themselves "African-Americans." There are Africans here who don't identify with this place--at least, not on a conscious level--and call themselves "New Afrikans." Explanations offered for this relatively new terminology, "New Afrikan," claim that the experience of forced labor and Jim Crow in the U.S., the fact that we have lost the languages of our Motherland ancestors, and the mixture of our bloodlines with Caucasian and other blood make us a **new** kind of African people. But just as we experienced forced labor and Jim Crow, didn't Africans who remained in Africa experience forced labor and colonialism? Just as we generally have no knowledge of the tongues of our ancestors, are we ignorant of the fact that there are Africans in Africa who speak the languages of their former European colonial "masters" and not their own indigenous tongues? And just as most of us here aren't genetically pure Africans, why do we think that, in Azania("South Africa"), for example, there are people classified as "coloureds"?

Whether the term is "African American" or "New Afrikan," it is a term that serves to psychologically and politically separate us from our Motherland and our sisters and brothers who live there. The "thinking" that produces such artificial distinctions between Africans born in the U.S. and Africans born in the Motherland or elsewhere is the same "thinking" that facilitates, for instance, U.S.-born Africans and Africans from the nations of Africa on U.S. college campuses looking upon each other as foreign.

Like Mexicanos(as)/Chicanos(as), we must not allow Europeans(Caucasians) to decide for us who and what we are. As the principle of Kujichagulia(self-determination) instructs us, **we** must name and define **ourselves.** And we must do so in a fashion that is conducive to an African untiy that transcends any and all man-made borders.

-Editor

Review

AFRICAN PRIDE(FROM THE OTHER SIDE) is Nilene Omodele Adeoti Foxworth's second book. The first, BURY ME IN AFRICA, was published in 1978. AFRICAN PRIDE is the author's sharing ith her people the intense longing she had to find and be united with her ultimate mother--the continent of Africa. It is her sharing with us the tale of immense joy she experienced upon the fulfillment of this desire. But Nilene's book is not so simple as the "mere" recounting of one person's excitement at the fulfillment of a dream. Yes, she experiences excitement. However, as passionate as is her happiness, her disappointments, sadnesses, and times of anger are no less passionate.

The author's tale--the story of what she describes as an "obsession" with Africa--truly begins when she is four or five years of age, a child playing jacks on the floor of her aunt's house. There was a tapestry, "a lovely soft and tranquil Egyptian scene, with the Sphinx centered. The Sphinx has a distinct broad African nose." Nilene tells us: "No one in my family knew the closeness I felt to that tapestry. I often thought of going off to that strange place where people rode camels to see those huge stones of black people."

But there is both a pull and a push in Nilene's life, the pull, as represented by the tapestry, is that of Mother Africa calling Nilene home. The push is racism in the U.S. and the oppression that lets her know that she is not welcome here. In the cahpter of her book, "Whose Lady Liberty," there is a passage which recounts her reaction to seeing a television feature on the Centennial celebrations and the Statue of Liberty:

> "I stormed into the kitchen, and went straight to the refrigerator to get a cold drink to cool myself down. With a glass of ice water in my hand, I stormed back into the T.V. room--switched the television off, and continued raging as my silent husband rocked nonchalantly in his rocking chair to

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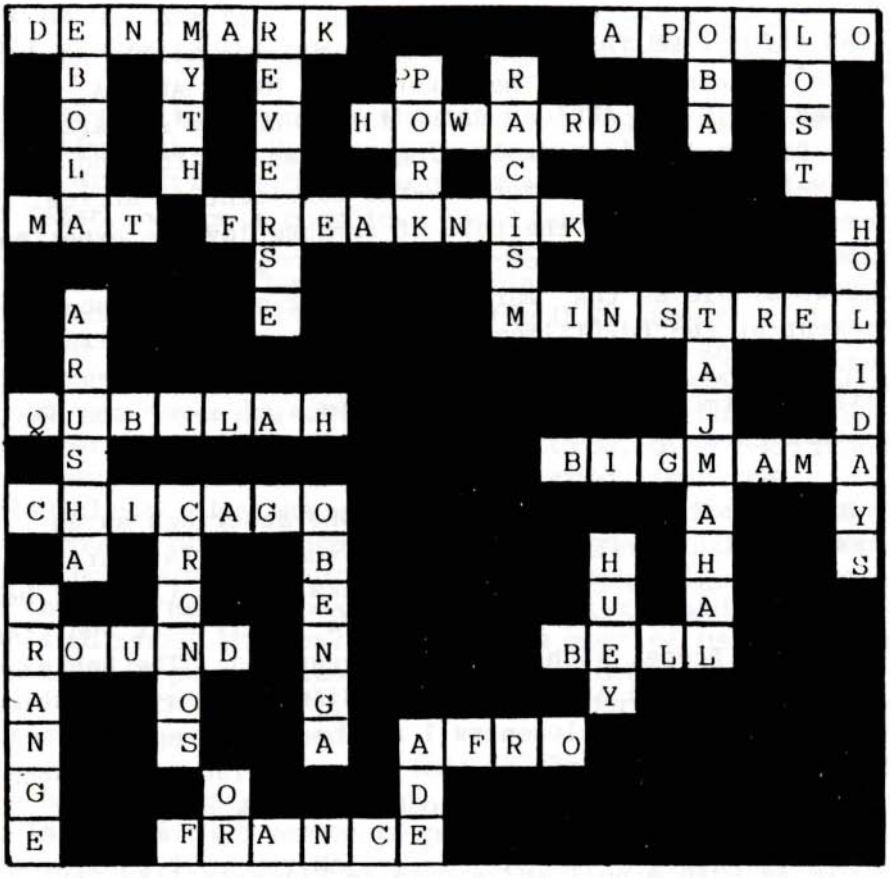
Solution To Africentric Crossword Puzzle #6


D E N M A R K A P O L L O
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> the rhythm of my rage; 'Hypocrites'! I shouted. 'Nothing but damn hypocrites'!...I thought of all the Blacks lynched, castrated like Emmitt Till, and murdered by insidious and bestial people. So I grabbed my pen and started writing..."

The author does get to the Motherland, in 1974 and, again, in the '80s. The times she spends there--in such nations as Zimbabwe, Ghana, Egypt, etc.--are times that are inspiring, uplifting, and otherwise good for her spirit. Nilene tells us of friendships, of the greatest acts of kindness and kinship, of just the feeling of being in the Motherland. On the other hand, she shares with us her anger and disappointment at seeing pregnant women having to stand on a bus in a city in Zimbabwe while young, healthy men sat; at seeing posters in shop windows featuring naked Caucasian women; at being treated like some kind of foreigner by a customs agent; etc.

AFRICAN PRIDE is not a sugar-coated story of a U.S.-born African woman's sojourn in the land of her ancestors. It is an intensely honest and passionate accounting of what she sees and experiences--the positive, the negative, the bewildering. Nilene is able to keep her feet, so to speak, because she understands that, just as African people in the U.S. have been profoundly affected by slavery and Jim Crow, her people in the Motherland have been likewise affected by colonialism. This is a valuable book, particularly for African people here who are planning to go to the continent. But for any African person seeking insight into what we have endured as a people and how we continue to keep living and striving, AFRICAN PRIDE is well worth reading. For ordering information, contact NOA International, P.O. Box 111092, Aurora, Colorado, 80042-1092

-Editor

June 17, 1995

Dear Reader:

The message in this memo is simple. Freedom is not free and **MOBETTER NEWS** is no exception to the rule. In order to continue to publish **MOBETTER** for you and by you, we must insist that you support this work. We are doing everything that we can to keep the rising costs from disconnecting us from you. However, **MOBETTER NEWS depends upon subscriptions**. Therefore, although inmates have not been asked to pay for their subscriptions in the past, it is essential that each and every reader do so now. The cost of a single copy is $2.00. The annual subscription fee of $7.50 entitles you **(inmates only)** to one free ad in the **Date-A-Mate** column. You could ask a friend or loved one to sponsor you but we'd rather have you **do-it-yourself**. The struggle for liberation from dependency has to start somewhere. The deadline for requesting the August issue is July 7, 1995 or Afrikan Independence Day, Saba Saba (seven, seven). Keep your name on the **MOBETTER** mailing list. Ask others to subscribe or to buy one copy at a time if that's all they can afford. Remember, when you don't read **MOBETTER NEWS**, you don't know what you're missing. Send your money order payable to **MOBETTER NEWS**, P.O. Box 1447, South Holland, IL 60473.

Gloria Latimore Peace,
Editor and Publisher

Announcements

The First Pan African International Multimedia Conference will be a seven-day colloquium of professional journalists representing major Black newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, Cable T.V. networks, video and film production companies, computer and other informational data bank systems as well as cultural and educational institutions, museums and foundations from the USA, Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, South and Central America.

This July 19-26 conference to be held in Dakar, Senegal, will address specific problems and achievements related to Pan African media...The purpose of the conference will be to provide our participants with the opportunity to explore new potential markets, to establish new media contacts, and to discover their rich historical roots...

Thiss conference is being organized and hosted by the Pan African Multimedia Planning Committee and will be held for the purpose of organizing a major conference for August of 1996...For more information, contact Henderson Travel, 900 Second St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002 (800) 327-2309.

Kemet Nu Productions Presents Video Tapes on: THE AFRIKAN ORIGIN OF CIVILIZATION, RELIGION, and Fashion, by Ashra and Merira Kwesi. Ashra Kwesi is a "griot"(historian) and lecturer on ancient Afrikan history and religion. Based on his 14 years of historical expeditions in Afrika, covering Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Ghana, he will reveal, first-hand, from the ancient temples, tombs and papyrus papers in Afrika, information recorded when Afrikan people were teachers of the world. Merira Kwesi is a lecturer on Afrikan fashion and culture, both ancient and modern. She presents a highly inspirational and motivational lecture(with slides) and fashion production detailing the symbolic and historical significance of our ancient garments, textiles and accessories from ancient times to the present. Write to: Kemet Nu Productions; 3870 Crenshaw Blvd., Suite 104-424; Los Angeles, CA; 90008. Or call (213) 938-8031.

Back In Time

In 640 A.C.E., the Islamic Army attacked the Byzantine Empire and seized co ntrol of Syria, Palestine and Egypt. The Arab military was led by General 'Amr when the city of Alexandria fell...It has been said that General 'Amr played a mojor role in the final destruction of sthe Library and University of Alexandria. He ordered his army to demolish the last remnants of these educational institutions, and when scholars begged him to spare them 'Amr declared, "If the library contains what is not in the Koran, it is false. If it contains what is already in the Koran, then it is superfluous. Burn it." In other instances, the temples that were not burned were dismantled block by block and the stones were used to build new structures in Cairo and various other cities...

Beginning in 813 A.C.E., a major center for learning was created in Baghdad and a number of universities were established by the new caliph, Abdullah Al Mamun, the son of the former ruler Harun Al-Rashid. Al Mamun was responsible for the translation into Arabic of the astronomical works of Ptolemy...The study of these great works helped the Arabs to become the most scientifically literate people of their day...

In 820, Al Mamun led an army of stone masons, engineers and architects on an assault of the Great Pyramid in an attempt to find the treasures that were purported to be hidden inside. Al Mamun's men tunneled more than 100 feet through solid masonry before entering into the descending passageway. The Arabs searched in vain for treasure and in a fit of rage they destroyed sections of the walls and floors looking for secret passageways, but they found none...

In 1799, a General by the name of Desaix discovered the marvelous Temple of Dendera which contained a wondrous circular zodiac in the ceiling of a room that was believed to have been used as an observatory. The zodiac was dynamited from the ceiling by Desaix's men and shipped to France, where it was later sold to Louis XVIII for 150,000 francs.

Source: NILE VALLEY CONTRIBUTIONS TO CIVILIZATION by Anthony T. Browder